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Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
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By

The Hon. Bertrand Russell

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THE PHANTOM SHIP.
Painted by Mary Bassett.

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BALDER'S DEATH.

BY CORNELIA STEKETEE HULST.

ARGUMENT.

THE first scene of this story is in the Heaven of Norse Mythology, or, to be more exact, in Asgard, the city of the Asas; and the characters are the Asas, the Norse gods, whose King is Odin. Asgard must be imagined as a golden city, not only paved with gold but piled with gold from the foundation to the pinacles of its palaces. It is a wonderwork of the most skilful of the giant race, the Jotuns, who were once friends of the Asas but are now foes, alienated by rivalry for power and gold.

In the scheme of the Universe, Asgard lies in the upper branches of the Tree of Life, where it rests at the top of the arch of Bifrost, the Rainbow Bridge, by which the Asas descend to earth when they will, riding their horses, except Thor, who is so heavy that he would break through its ethereal substance. As far beneath the earth as Asgard lies above it, is the Lower World, called Hell, or Helheim, because it is the home of Queen Hel, a Jotun whose power is matched with Odin's and who will lead her kindred to attack him in Asgard as soon as she is able.

Hel is the daughter of Loke, the destructive spirit of Fire.

The Golden City of Asgard shines in splendor against a blue sky, and Odin, its king, is clad in a regal mantle of blue. Among his circle he is kingly indeed, a leader in battle, triumphant in single combat, astute in counsel, and a loving father to his heroes. All-Father is the name with which they chiefly honor him, but they add many other names in honor of his powers and exploits, such as the Many-in-One, Ygg (the Clear-Thinker), and the Wayfarer. Odin's sister, Frigg, is also his wife, and as Queen of Heaven is

justly honored, for she is wise and good. The son of Odin and Frigg is Balder, the best loved Asa in heaven. * Like Odin, Balder has many appropriate names, among which are the White One, the Peaceful, and the Father of Justice, for his palace has sheltered no evil. He is clothed in radiant white, and rays beam about him as from a sun. Balder is the glory of heaven. As is fit, Nanna, his wife, is like him though lesser, a moon-white Dis, and their union is the most perfect.

The nature of Loke is flame, and his color is flame; but Hel is death-white, and her heart is cold, as her kingdom lies cold in a region of eternal frost and snow. Hel is the most powerful of Loke's evil offspring. Her mother is no less hated, a Jotun witch named Angerboda, because she bodes anguish to all of her friends as well as her foes. This circle of destructive spirits, including also Hel's terrible brothers, the Midgard Serpent and the Fenris Wolf, bide their time to conquer both Earth and Asgard, mustering their forces in the Lower World and in the Mirkwood, where Angerboda's wolf-sons congregate. At Raknarok, the World's Twilight, they will issue forth for the final struggle. In the one great conflict that they have so far had with Odin for the rule of the world, Odin has been able to control them, casting the Serpent far forth into the sea, binding the Wolf Fenrer to a rock on a distant island, Lyngve, and banishing Hel to the Lower World, where in the lowest of nine gloomy circles she established her throne, called Despair. Hers is a sad, loveless kingdom, and she is the cold sovereign of the dead. The Weird Norns (Past, Present, and Future), made her supreme in the Lower World, and gave her permission to come to Earth only at midnight to select those who are to belong to her. Brave warriors are chosen by the Valkyrie, Odin's War Maidens, to be taken dying from the battlefield to Valhal, his Hall of Heroes in Asgard; but those who are cowards or who die at peace are taken by Hel.

The incidents in this story occur shortly after the Wolf Fenrer has been bound, when Loke and Hel have been balked in their purpose to capture Asgard by means of Fenrer's wonderful strength. The action begins on one of Hel's midnight visits to Earth to give warning to those whom she has chosen to die.

NOW the dusk and the nightfall were early
And the dawn 'was late in its coming,

Nature gives
signs that fore-
bode disaster. And the days were so dark that at noontide
Deep shadows lay brooding in Valhal—

Strange sights; and strange sounds smote the hearing,
 Low soughing and sighing and whispers.
 It shook the hearts of the hearers.
 Were Hel and her hordes from cold Helheim
 Stealing on Asgard in darkness?
 The eyes of the erewhile calm Asas
 Grew gloomy, and heavy their hearts were;
 Sore troubled, they tossed on their couches.
 And, the first time in Asgard, one midnight
 A moaning and crying awaked them. . . .
 Fear sucked at their hearts like a vampire. . . .
 Then a wailing arose in Bright Broadblink
 Whence naught but joy's sounds had e'er issued;
 And shrill, as pine shrieks when the lightning
 Has cleft to its heart, Balder shrieked,
 And the ramparts of Asgard echoed
 And its vaulting re-echoed his shrieking.

They groped their way through the dark,
 And as day broke in Asgard held council
 And heard Balder's dream,
 His vision of evil impending:

Balder's
 dream.

"All we love, all we hate were in conflict!
 The Gulph of the Nether World opened
 And Hel sought her lord. . . .to dwell with her. . . .
 And I was her lord, and must follow,
 For Death hurled his dart, and it hit me."

And Nanna, his spouse, where she lay
 With her flowerlike face on Frigg's bosom,
 His mother's, shuddered and sobbed
 Ere she spoke in accents complaining,
 "Aye, Hel came to Asgard, love-hungry;
 She sought her a lord. . . .she craves mine. . . .
 Me she hates—O Father! O Mother!
 King! Frigg! Help our Balder
 Or Hel will yet hale him to Helheim!"

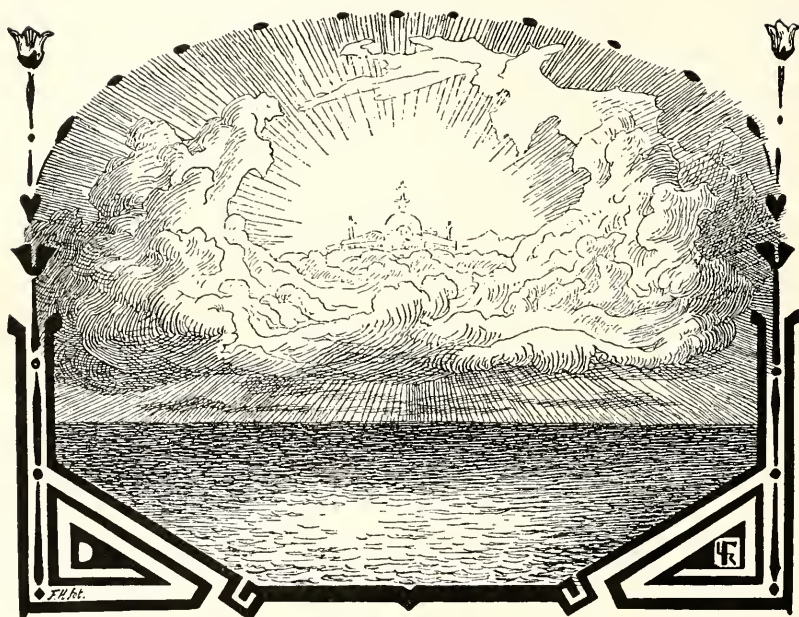
Nanna pleads
 for him.

And Frigg answered, comforting Nanna,
 "Dear child, who would harm our good Balder,
 Beloved Light of the Heavens?

Frigg's answer.

If Hel does desire him—oh, surely
 She never will find one to slay him,
 For all in the world love our Balder!"

But still Frigg was troubled at heart,
 Asking why was his slumber afflicted
 With dreams that forebade disaster;
 And Nanna, still weeping, repeated,
 "Hel will yet hale him to Helheim."



THE HEAVENLY CITY.

Odin departs
 to learn the
 future.

Then Odin, the wise, the Clear-Thinker,
 Who loved Balder more dearly than any
 For that best he knew his son's nature,
 So gentle and loving and peace-full,
 Arose and departed in silence.

Frigg's efforts
 to save Balder.

But Frigg, with the Asas remaining,
 Took oath from all Nature to spare him
 So that Hel could find nothing to slay him.
 She bound land and water with oaths,
 And gold, and silver, and iron,—

All metals, all earths, all plants
 That are growing or grown on the earth,
 In the air or the water; all birds,
 All diseases, all reptiles, all creatures
 That creep, walk, or fly, to earth's confines.

And again there was joy in the heavens,
 And a marvel it was, those glad days,
 To see how all nature loved Balder.
 They gathered a circle about him
 And, playful, threw missiles upon him
 In their sports on his plain, the fair Peace Place;
 And great was the honor they did him,
 Hewing, and hacking, and hurling,
 Most mighty, most skilful,—and harmless.
 Darts recoiled, and hard flints did not hurt him;
 Asa blades bit not, but rebounded
 Though keen and hero-like wielded;
 When it hurtled forth with his thunder,
 Thor's Hammer to Thor's hand returned
 And on Balder had left no more mark
 Than an arrow when cleaving the heavens
 Can leave on the air it has parted.
 Frigg smiled, Nanna laughed, and bright Balder
 Forgot his dream and its portent.

The fears of
 the Asas are
 relieved.

But Odin, All-Father, forgot not,
 Nor smiled, as he rode through deep valleys,
 Descending and dark, to the North.
 Swiftly his steed passed the landmarks,
 His Sleipner, fleet-footed and willing,
 Smiting the earth till it trembled
 With the beat of his feet, rune-enristed.
 For nine days successive down Helway
 He traveled, by bridges, o'er chasms
 And wastes, till he came to Hel's kingdom;
 And never he stopped or turned back
 Though her Hel-hounds he met, slaughter-craving,
 Foam-flecked and blood-stained and gaping,
 That bayed as he passed,
 And though bands of the Dead hailed him, wailing.
 But when Hell-walls loomed black through the darkness,

Odin journeys
 to the Vala

With towers and pinacles beetling,
 And heavy-barred Hell-gates denied him—
 Would he force them, again to face Hel?...
 To the East he turned Sleipner, to the death-house
 Where the Vala, a seeress, lay buried.

He practices
 his art to raise
 her from her
 grave.

Three times he circled around it,
 Three times in widening circles,
 And three times three, chanting Runes;
 Then, facing the North, a spell
 He pronounced, most potent, compelling,
 Until, in her grave, Vala wakened,
 And rose in winding-sheet swathed,
 And uttered unwilling,
 In accents grave-hollow, death-husky:

Vala speaks.

"My grave has been covered with snow;
 My grave has been beaten with rain;
 Upon it the night-dews have fallen
 As many a year I have lain;
 Pass onward, and leave me in quiet,
 'Thou stranger—What is thy name,
 That hast wakened my ghost in its grave?"

Odin deceives
 her as to his
 name, and
 compels her
 to answer.

And Odin, the Many-in-One,
 Spoke the name he ever is named
 From that journey forth: "The Wayfarer, I,
 Veltam's son; and of Hel I demand,
 And these benches with rings overspread.
 For whom is Hel's banquet prepared?
 For whom are her couches o'erlaid?
 Speak, Vala, and tell;
 I shall bind thee with runes, that thou answer."

He learns
 that Balder
 must die,

"The mead that stands brewed is for Balder—
 Let the race of the Asas bewail him!
 Now thou hast compelled me to speak it,
 And now let me lay me to rest."

That Hoder
 will slay him,

But Odin: "Speak, Vala!
 I shall bind thee with runes, that thou answer,
 For yet I must learn of his slayer."

And Vala:

"Blind Hoder will slay him,
Will send his glorious brother
To dwell in the halls of dark Helheim,
Now thou hast compelled me to speak it,
And now let me lay me to rest."

But Odin: "Speak, Vala!

I shall bind thee with runes, that thou answer;



ODIN QUESTIONING VALA.

Thou still must reveal me the vengeance
That any may wreak on his slayer."

"Young Vale and Vidar the 'vengers
Who his slayer shall slay.
Now thou hast compelled me to speak it,
And now let me lay me to rest."

And that
Vidar and
Vale will
avenge him;

And Odin: "Speak, Vala!
The Maidens, three Jotuns—"
(Of the Wise Ones he questioned, the Weird
Ones

But when
Odin asks con-
cerning the
Norns

Who weave the web of the world,

Urd, and Verdand', and Skuld,
That-Has-Been, That-Is, and That-Shall-Be)

Vala knows
him for Odin,
and taunts
him with his
impotence.

But Vala broke forth when he named them,
"Not the Wayfarer—ODIN!
Now I know!—thou hast tricked me! . . .
Hel, help! I appeal to Queen Hel!
Go, boast of thy knowledge, exulting!
The Norns have his thread, and are weaving—
Can thy runes cast a spell upon Skuld,
Or alter a thread in the pattern
That Verdand' is weaving?
Hel, help! I appeal to Queen Hel!
To her the Norns gave dark Helheim,
And wanhope is thine in that kingdom!
Henceforth no more questions I answer
Till bondage be broken at Doom.
I sleep till the sound of the Trumpet."

Then Odin withdrew him toward Valhal,
For Vala took refuge with Hel.
And, again for nine days, to the South
He rode; climbing the heights of his city
While he pondered what Vala foretold.

III.

Loke, dis-
guised as a
maiden

Now Loke, the evil, heard laughter,
As he lurked at the portals of Asgard,
And in his fell spirit most spiteful
Were the thoughts and the feelings that wakened.
Assuming the guise of a maid
That is free from all guile, to Fensal,
That fairest of gold-halls, he came,
Where Frigg sat with Nanna in converse:
"Mother, why are the Asas so blithesome?"
His tongue that asked it dripped honey.
The Mother of Asas made answer,
"Our Balder is safe from Hel's clutches;
Creation has sworn not to harm him,
The air and the earth and the water,
All life that is *in, on, or under*,"—

Questions
Frigg,

The honey-sweet voice interrupted,
 "What, *all* things have sworn it?"
 "The things I have spoken have sworn it,
 But now I bethink me, a thing
 That is growing nor *on* earth, nor *under*,
 Nor *in* air or water, nor *under*,

And learns
 her secret.



VOLUSPA.

But, sole of its kind, on an oak tree—
 The mistletoe twig—hath not sworn it;
 But weak is its nature, and tender."

He seeks
Balder, to
slay him.

Loke had what he sought, and went forth
Straightway to seek mistletoe growing.
From an oak tree he cut it, then hied
To the sports of the Asas in Peace Place,
Balder's broad, smiling Mead,
Where in midst of the Circle stood Balder,
The White, white-browed and white robèd,
Radiant, beaming around,
While about him flew missiles, played weapons
In that game that they made in his honor.
And as each play failed of effect

Odin returns
to Asgard, re-
joicing to
hear that Bal-
der is still
safe.

There rose shouts and applause from the players
So loud and so long that the Wayfarer
Nearing the portals of Asgard
Heard, and rejoiced that he heard,
For they told of the safety of Balder.

Loke per-
suades Hoder
to throw the
mistletoe,

Apart from the Circle stood Hoder,
The Blind, the twin brother of Balder.
The smile on his face spoke contentment
And pride in the prowess of Balder.
"And why do you not honor Balder,
Hoder?" said Loke; and Hoder,
"Because I am blind, and unable."
"Stand forth, then, and take thou this missile
And hurl with thy might; I will guide thee."
And Hoder, to honor his Balder,
Put forth all his might, and the mistletoe
Flew from his hand, Death's own dart—
And pierced Balder. . . .

And strikes
Balder down.

Balder's
dream is
fulfilled.

And again Balder shrieked, as that midnight,
And heaven re-echoed his shrieking
From rampart to rampart and vaulting
And again from the vault to the ramparts,
Through the Halls of the Heavenly City,
To Fensal, where Nanna and Frigg
Were weaving their wreaths, and to Odin,
Who had entered the gates of his City.

The grief in
Asgard,

Ah, who can tell of their grief!
Beyond power of speech was their sorrow,
And a deathlike stillness fell on them

As still Death had fallen on Balder.
The Heavenly City lay hushed
As the yard where the dead lie entombèd.
But when dying—nay, *dead*, Balder fell,
There rose wailing and groans from the Asas
From throats that were strangers to weeping,
From heroes of godlike endurance.
Only Vidar stood silent, unshaken;
Tyr trembled; Thor shook like an aspen;
Young Vale's breast heaved, tempest-shaken.
And through his clenched teeth an oath rattled;
Apart and unheeded stood Hoder,
His face as a ghost's strayed from Helheim,
His blind eyes strained as if seeing,
His white lips at horrible working,
Form tense, hand at ear, forward bending.
And then Father Odin descended,
And gathered his son to his heart
And bemoaned him:

“Oh Balder, my Son, my Belovèd,
Would that Weird had taken thy Father! *Odin's lament.*
Full gladly—my life for thy life—
Take it—Oh, would thou mightst take it—”
Then his accents were lost in his sobbing.

And when Frigg and Nanna together
Approached, Balder's wife and his mother—
Too sacred their sorrow,
Draw the veil and gaze not upon it. . . .

At last Frigg spoke: "Who will go
And pray Hel to take ransom for Balder?" Frigg advises
"Give her ransom?" roared Thor, "Give her ransom; but
Battle! Thor proposes war.

I reed you, storm Hel and take Balder!
We had better force battle to-day than wait longer—
First, vengeance! Who was the slayer?"

The red beard shook on his bosom;
From 'neath brows beetling black as his storm-clouds
Light leapt, levin-red, as he thundered.

His knuckles gleamed white
As he tightened his hold on the haft of his hammer.

Hoder confesses his act,
and tells of Loke.

Then Hoder groped forward, bowed, broken,—
“I give myself to his ’vengers—
This hand was the hand that slew Balder—
But Loke’s the voice—his the purpose.”
And he told the tale of the slaying.

Loke pleads sanctuary

The Asas started for Loke
To tear him to pieces. “Peace Place!”
Cried Loke, “This is Balder’s Peace,
Where violence cannot be done
But vengeance will follow the doer.”
And Nanna pled, “This is Balder’s Peace,
Let no one profane it with vengeance.”
And escapes. So Loke escaped.
And again Thor thundered, “*Storm Helheim
And rescue our Balder!*”
And the Asas echoed, “Storm Hell!”

Frigg gives counsel,

And forthwith they had sworn and departed,
But that Frigg spoke, calmly and sadly,
“Nay, Asas, storm Hell not, for Helheim
The Norns gave to Hel till the Trumpet
Shall sound on the morning of Doom—
Ye must fail if ye go—but go one
And offer our ransom to Hel.”

And Hermod departs on the mission, while

And Hermod, surnamed the Nimble,
Said, “Frigg, I will go on thy mission,”
And Odin gave fleet-footed Sleipner
To Hermod departing for Hell.

The Asas deck the funeral ship.

Then the Asas bore Balder’s pale form
Where his Ringhorn lay, greatest of vessels,
And on its broad deck built his pyre
Of the boughs that they brought from the forest;
And there each laid a gift, jewelled armor,
Rich rings and brooches, vast riches,
To pile on his breast and about him.
There Odin, bowed and sore grievèd,

Laid Draupner, the world's wealth and increase,
His ring-dropping-rings, and spoke bitter: Odin gives
"Let Earth cease to bring forth her increase— Draupner;
Let all things with all be confounded. . . .
Would that Time itself might run backward
Or stop in its profitless courses."
There Frigg laid her carpet of verdure Frigg, her
That covers the Earth; and Fulla, pet; Fulla
The yellow grain of the harvest. grain.

And through the still watches of night
When Nanna and Frigg sat beside him,
Sad Sigyn came to her sister,
The sad wife, truest and tenderest,
That Loke abandoned in Asgard
To wed the foul witch Angerboda ;
And Sigyn mourned beside Nanna
For the wrong Loke did to her Balder.

And, late, Nanna slumbered; and sweetly
Peace settled upon her pale features—
A white flower silvered in moonlight;
And speech passed her lips, to a Vision
Addressed, and then she woke, joyful:
“Dear Mother and Sister, farewell!
Your Nanna may go to her Balder.
Our lives were so closely inwoven
That even in death we are mated—
Give thanks to kind Verdand’, the weaver!
Dear Mother and Sister, farewell!”
And again Nanna slept,
And thenceforth did Frigg and sad Sigyn
Keep deathwatch for Nanna and Balder.
And when his great pyre was built,
On the broad deck of Ringhorn, his vessel,
By Balder’s side they laid Nanna,
Till the solemn rites should be rendered
If Hermod returned from his Mission
With refusal to Asgard from Hel.

Nanna’s
vision.

She is la
side Bal
his pyre.

IV.

In the meantime fleet Sleipner sped northward,
And never he stopped or turned back

Hermod's
journey to
Hell.

As he galloped through valleys, o'er chasms,
 Save once, at the Bridge, where a herald,
 Its keeper, called "Hail!" to challenge
 His passing. "I am Hermod! To Hel
 Is my mission, for Balder!"
 And ready reply came, "Pass on!
 It was over this Bridge he descended.
 God speed thee! Greet Balder!"
 And again vast stretches he covered
 Till the Walls and the Gates rose, of Hell.



HERMOD DEPARTING FOR HELL.

"Hail Hermod! hail Sleipner!" said Balder,
 And drew near with Nanna to Hermod
 To fondle the steed, as in Asgard
 Was ever his wont . . .
 But when he seemed to embrace them,
 His arms, they were naught but a shadow;
 And a shadow was Nanna, and shadows
 The ghosts that swarmed 'round them,
 Each bearing a brand on its forehead
 Of Hel's, the slothful, the craven,
 The wicked, but each with a hope
 In its eyes, and a light as in Balder's,
 For light still beamed from his eyes
 And a halo still circled his body—
 Heaven's Sun midst the shadows of Hell.

He enters
 Helheim

"Hail Hermod! Hail Sleipner!" said Balder,
 "But your journey to Helheim is bootless,
 Save that you may bear witness in Heaven
 When homeward you carry Hel's message
 That love such as Nanna's has might
 Far more than Hel's hate, e'en in Hell.
 Bitter cruel is Hel, and unyielding—
 Accept not, believe not her promise,
 For hate fills her heart full of venom
 And distrust gnaws her vitals with anguish.

And receives
 Balder's mes-
 sage to Asgard.

Since Nanna has come, Hel has hidden
 In Anguish, her palace in Niflhel,
 Where she lies enraged in Despair,
 For a hope that she trusted has failed her—
 The sight of love's joy is Hel's sorrow....
 But let not the Mid-Earth and Asgard
 Grow gloomy as Helheim with mourning.
 Charge this on our loved ones, returning,
 And charge them to comfort each other—
 And charge them to comfort poor Hoder:
 Assure him I love him as ever,
 For unwitting he slew me. Forgive him,
 And when our last rites ye have rendered
 Let Nature increase and be joyous—
 To this end I send my best grave-gift
 Again to All-Father, his Draupner,
 His ring-that-drops-riches."
 And Nanna added her grave gifts:
 "To Frigg I send back her soft carpet,
 May flowers blossom upon it;
 And to Fulla give back her gay girdle,
 The maid with the waving gold tresses."

He returns
 his gifts.

And now Hermod continued his journey
 To offer Frigg's ransom to Hel.
 Through Slid he swam, River of Venom,
 And kingdom and kingdom he traversed
 Till he came to the lowest and darkest,
 The Ninth, where Hel dwells in Anguish,
 Her palace, and feasts at Famine,
 Her banqueting-board, and rules

Hermod's
 descent to
 Niflhel,

From Despair, her black throne, double seated
 And canopied, waiting a mate—
 (But a mate will there never be found
 To rule in that kingdom despairing,
 For sole of her kind is Queen Hel.)
 Delay, her man-servant, led him
 Across her threshold, Abysm,
 And her maid-servant, Slowness,
 Through portals and aisles, long approaches,
 Led him thence to her audience room.



THE SHORE OF THE CORPSES.

When Hel beheld Hermod approaching
 And his audience with Hel,
 She rose from her couch, her hard Care-Bed,
 Where rest she had sought;
 She ascended Despair, and, haughty,
 She spake as kings speak to war envoys.
 So deathlike her presence, so grewsome,
 Hermod's blood curdled cold, but he hailed her
 And delivered the message he bore her,
 His eyes fixed unflinching upon her,
 And besought her send Balder and Nanna
 To Asgard, and herself fix their ransom:

Hermod's message,
 "Of the Asas choose any, our greatest—
 So dearly we love him—choose Hoder,
 ,Appropriate mate." But Hel shuddered.

Bold Hermod spoke on:

"It is better for thee to give Balder,
For if Balder thou keep he'll oppose thee;
And all Hell will love him and hate thee—
And Nanna's he is."—Did Hel whiten?

Dead-cold was her voice as she answered,
"But does all Creation love Balder?"

And Hel's
answer.

If all in the world of the living
Will weep him, take Balder, and Nanna;
Should any refuse, I will keep him."

The very ghosts in dark Helheim
Wailed loud when they heard her; gentle
Nanna

All things
weep for
Balder

Sobbed; and fleet Sleipner and Hermod
Shed tears as Hel's message they bore
Speeding back to the Mid-Earth and Asgard;
And wherever they passed Nature wept,
Hard stones wept, and metals, and plant life;
The mistletoe wept, and the oak-tree;
Wild beasts wept, and men, and the Asas
Who held funeral feast around Ringhorn.
And when they carried Hel's message
Wherever space stretched through Creation
There was weeping from all things that heard it.

And almost the Asas had hope
That fresh color had flushed his pale face
And that Balder was rising to greet them,
When a hag in her cave they espied,
Evil Thok, an old ogress.

"Oh Thok, weep Balder from Helheim,"

Except old
Thok,

They prayed; but Thok answered,

"With dry tears of Thok will weep Balder!
Old Thok never joyed in his gladness—
Let Hel keep what she has garnered!"

She was gone, and the echoes repeated,
"Hel keep what she has garnered!"

And again, "Keep what she has garnered!"

And again, "She has garnered!" and "Garnered!"

Then, harshly, a laugh without mirth,

A screech and a cackle—they knew—

Who is Loke
disguised.

"Loke's laughter, and we must miss Balder,
For Thok is Loke, who mocks us."

V.

Hoder asks
for death,

When, hopeless and silent, at sunset
They wended their way back to Asgard
And gathered again at the seashore,
One met them who, helpless,
Awaited their coming, blind Hoder.
"Oh, warrior brothers," he prayed them,
"One who never could join you in battle
Begs a boon—do ye grant it in pity!
Deal me death, that slew Balder beloved,
And in Hell let me join him to comfort,
For he loved me, and loves, though I slew him.
Then slay me, and let me lie dead
By him that I love....and forgive....
Unwitting I slew him....forgive!"

And the Vala's
word is ful-
filled, when
his breast is
risted by Vale
and Vidar.

The plea of blind Hoder prevailed;
And young Vale and Vidar, in pity—
That thread by the Weird Ones was woven
And none could alter that pattern—
Deep-risted his breast with the spear-point
Till his spirit passed, to join Balder.
So atonement he made, and in pity
They bore him dead to high Ringhorn
And laid him, red-dyed, beside Balder,
And in pity they wept and bewailed him.

Farewells are
spoken,

And when the Tide had arisen
And the Deep and the Distance were calling,
A last time they bade Balder farewell;
Father Odin stooped and addressed him,
And, gravating a mark on his forehead,
He set his torch to the pyre;
Then the winds and the waves took high Ringhorn,
And, flame-bound, westward it drifted,
Away—and away—from their ken,
To regions whence no man returneth.
And none saw the end, nor can tell it.

And the ship
drifts out with
the tide.

Surely, that was the float fraught most precious
Of all, in time past, and forever.

And when it had passed their horizon
And Day went, and Night came, blackshrouded,
Odin spoke: "Farewell, we must miss thee, Odin's
Farewell,
Bright son, our hope and our joy!
Now the Weird Ones have swept thee to Helheim....
And wise is Weird with a Wisdom



ODIN WHISPERING RUNES TO BALDER DEAD.

That passeth our knowledge.
Let us bow our heads in submission....
As Weird wills, so be it!

and resig-
nation.

"Come, Frigg; come, our children,
And let us comfort each other.
A word I whispered to Balder
And a sign on his forehead I risted
That will quell hateful Hel,
(A wise Word, fateful and runic,
The knowledge I added to knowledge

He gives hope
to the Asas,

What time I o'erhung the abysses)
To assuage the rancor of hate
And turn evil against the ill-doer.

"Lo, a Vision is rising before me—

And foretells
Balder's
glory,

Humbly I thank thee, thou Weird One!—

I see Him, with sight that is certain....

And not Death, but Life Everlasting,

For His palace has sheltered no Evil!

His attain-
ment of wis-
dom,

That Mead that Hel brewed, mingling floods

Of all Fountains of Life, He will drink,

And all Wisdom, all Good will be His.

And the Dead that in love drink those waters

Are His, the Redeemèd and Blessèd,

And of the
Blessed,

For that Mead when they drink will transfigure

Their ghosts, and new bodies will clothe them

With Strength and with Beauty immortal.

"Oh Balder, our White One, our Just,

Though I gave my eye to buy Wisdom—

That draught of the flood of Urd's Fountain—

Thrice wiser art thou than thy Father!

His victory
over Hel,

Hateful Hel can never subdue Thee

To do her hard bidding... her Lord,

Whom she chose—and her Master!

And when the World-Web has been woven

And the fiery flames of Surt's vengeance

Have climbed from Earth to high Asgard,

When our Green Tree has sunk in gray ashes,

And his king-
dom of Alf-
heim,

Lo, thine the New Earth, the New Asgard,

The new Dawn... the new Realm of the Spirit!

"Sustain we ourselves and each other,

And keep our world bright, as He bade,

After
Ragnarok.

While we wait the blare of the Trumpet

That summons Creation to Doom."

So Odin. The Asas assented,

And long as they sat at the seashore

They spoke of those dear and departed,

Of the conquest of Hel, and the Judgment,

And heard Hermod rehearse of his journey—

How the Dead, even then, loved their Balder

And how Hel and her kingdom they hated.